



# THE ROOKIE'S SPRINT TRI PLAN

You can do a triathlon!  
Follow this road map  
to cross your first  
triathlon finish line in  
just eight weeks.

**WANT TO STEP UP TO AN OLYMPIC-DISTANCE RACE?**  
Once you have completed your sprint triathlon, take a really easy week to recover. If you decide to target an Olympic-distance race (1-mile swim, 25-mile bike, 6.2-mile run), continue training after your recovery. The following week, you can repeat Weeks 4 through 7, and simply increase the listed duration of each workout, and the tasks within, by 50 percent. Week 8 (race week) should be performed exactly the same as depicted in the sprint triathlon program, with no additional volume added, as your rest for your event.

 If you're brand new to triathlon, trying to figure out training for swimming, cycling and running in an organized progression can be a little daunting. Sprint triathlons—which vary but are typically around a 750-yard swim, 12-mile bike and 3-mile run—are a great entry point to the sport and achievable for anyone committed to following this eight-week plan for building endurance. This program will help remove some of the training mystery for the triathlon rookie!

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN**  
Before starting this plan, you should be in good health and injury free. You must be able to swim 100 yards non-stop without excessive stress (preferably freestyle). Your general fitness should allow for 20 minutes of non-stop cycling and 10 minutes of continuous running. This plan provides you with a gentle, targeted progression to get you to the start line confident you can cover the distance.

The program follows a routine of five training days per week, with one session per training day. Initially there are two swims per week, and alternating one run and two bike workouts one week, followed by two runs and one bike the next week. Eventually you progress to two swims, two bike rides and two runs per week, with one of those runs directly after your bike ride. Note the indicated terrain. Attempt to do the listed sessions on the scheduled days to maximize effectiveness of the plan and minimize risk of injury.



BY LANCE WATSON 



### RATE OF PERCEIVED EXERTION (RPE) TRAINING

All workouts are structured with training zones, according to rate of perceived effort.

ZONE 1	ZONE 2	ZONE 3	ZONE 4	ZONE 5
Gentle rhythmic breathing. Pace is easy and relaxed. The intensity is a jog, or very easy swim or bike spin.	Breathing rate and pace increase slightly. You should still be comfortable but with slightly deeper breathing. Running and cycling pace remains comfortable and conversation is possible.	Become aware of breathing a little harder. Pace is moderate with a stronger swimming, cycling or running rhythm. This is "feel good" fast. It is slightly more difficult to hold conversation.	Starting to breathe hard, pace is fast and beginning to get uncomfortable and should be challenging to maintain. This effort is approaching an all-out 15-minute swim, or 30-minute bike and run pace.	Breathing is deep and forceful and you may notice a second significant change in breathing pattern. Pace is all-out sustainable for one to five minutes. Mental focus is required and it should feel moderately uncomfortable.

### KEY:

' = minutes

" = seconds

RPM = revolutions per minute or cadence

ZONE = perceived effort zone (see table at left)

(") = indicates rest in between intervals

NOTE: For the swim workouts (e.g., "16x25"), either yards or meters are acceptable, depending on your pool.

A "25" is one length and a "50" is down and back.

### WEEK 1: BUILD CONSISTENCY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 16x25 (30"). Pace these evenly and start slow. Zone 1.	<b>RUN</b> 5x(2' walk/3' run in Zone 1), flat terrain.	<b>BIKE</b> 30' flat terrain, Zone 1 at 80-90 RPM.	Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 10x50 (45"), Zone 1.	<b>RUN</b> 6x(1.5' walk/3.5' run in Zone 1), flat terrain.

**FOCAL POINT** Be conservative with your effort in week 1 but strong in your conviction to complete the schedule this week. Start sessions easy to warm up. **BIKE TIP:** RPM stands for revolutions per minute, which is your cadence. To determine RPM without a cycling computer, simply count the amount of times your right knee comes up in the pedal stroke for 30 seconds, then double that number.

### WEEK 2: BUILD CONSISTENCY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 24x25 (30"). Pace these evenly. Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 30' flat terrain as 15' Zone 1, 15' Zone 2 at 80-90 RPM.	<b>RUN</b> 2x10' (2' walking rest), flat terrain, Zone 1.	Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 12x50 (35"). Pace these evenly. Zone 1.	<b>BIKE</b> 45' rolling terrain as 15' Zone 1, 30' Zone 2 at 80-90 RPM.

**FOCAL POINT** You are already increasing your fitness at this point. Each session is a stepping stone to the following week, so take pride in executing the workouts well from start to finish. Take your rest days as scheduled and eat well.

### WEEK 3: BUILD CONSISTENCY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 8x75 (40"). Pace these evenly. Zone 2.	<b>RUN</b> 20' rolling terrain as 10' Zone 1, 10' Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 55' flat terrain as 20' Zone 1, 35' Zone 2 at 85-95 RPM.	Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 4x100 (45"), Zone 2. 6x50 (30"), just a little faster in Zone 3.	<b>RUN</b> 30' flat terrain, Zone 1.

**FOCAL POINT** Always be moving forward physically and mentally with no coasting. When riding uphill, flat or downhill, pay attention to the pressure on your pedals, which is energy pushing the bike forward. When running and swimming, think about even rhythm and cadence pushing you forward. Mentally focus always on doing your best work, best effort and positive self-talk in sessions.

### WEEK 4: INCREASE ENDURANCE

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 12x75 (20") as 6 in Zone 2, 6 in Zone 3.	<b>RUN</b> 40' rolling terrain as 15' Zone 1, 25' Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 70' rolling to hilly terrain as 20' Zone 1, 50' Zone 2 at 85-95 RPM.	Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 10x100 (25"), Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 45' flat terrain, Zone 1 at 90-100 RPM. Make a quick transition into running shoes (less than 3'). <b>RUN</b> 20' off the bike, flat terrain, Zone 2.

**FOCAL POINT** As you reach the midpoint of this program, reconnect with why you want to do a triathlon. What do you like about sport and what makes you feel good when you are out there training? The answers to these questions are what will get you through the most challenging days, and they are what you will draw upon on race day.

### WEEK 5: INCREASE ENDURANCE

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 2x200 (30"). 4x100 (20"). All Zone 2.	<b>RUN</b> 40' rolling terrain as 15' Zone 1, 25' Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 80' rolling to hilly terrain as 20' Zone 1, 25' Zone 2, 15' Zone 3, 20' Zone 2 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 500 (2'). 5x100 (20"). All Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 60' flat terrain, Zone 1 at 90-100 RPM. Quick transition (less than 3'). <b>RUN</b> 20' off the bike, flat terrain, Zone 2.

**FOCAL POINT** You are tough. Training is "good" discomfort, where you develop strong coping skills for race day. Your Sunday transition run (which, in combination with the bike, is called a brick workout) is a perfect place to practice physical and mental race skills as well. Be organized and focused on starting your run immediately off the bike by having a place to drop your bike and your run shoes ready. Create your own transition area.

### WEEK 6: IMPROVE RACE FITNESS

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 1000 non-stop, Zone 2.	<b>RUN</b> 35' rolling terrain as 15' Zone 1, 10' Zone 3, 5' Zone 4, 5' Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 60' flatter to rolling terrain as 15' Zone 1, 2x(5' Zone 3, 2.5' Zone 2, 5' Zone 4, 2.5' Zone 2), 15' Zone 1 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 10x100 (20"). Swim #3, #6 and #9 faster in Zone 4, the rest in Zone 1.	<b>BIKE</b> 40' flat terrain as 15' Zone 1, 15' Zone 3, 10' Zone 4 at 90-100 RPM. Make a quick transition (less than 2'). <b>RUN</b> 20' off the bike, flat terrain as 10' Zone 4, 5' Zone 2, 5' Zone 1.

**FOCAL POINT** This is your last two-week segment before you back off for race taper week. Make the most of each session, pull in all the resources and learning from the past five weeks and write down small goals you want to accomplish with each day. Be positive and calm: This is the ideal state in which to maximize your training sessions.

### WEEK 7: IMPROVE RACE FITNESS

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 500, Zone 1 build to Zone 2. 10x50 (20") as 25 fast/Zone 4, 25 easy/Zone 1.	<b>RUN</b> 35' rolling terrain as 15' Zone 1, 10' Zone 3, 5' Zone 5, 5' Zone 2.	<b>BIKE</b> 60' rolling to hilly terrain as 15' Zone 1, 5' Zone 3, 2.5' Zone 2, 5' Zone 4, 2.5' Zone 2, 5x(1' Zone 5, 2' Zone 1), 15' Zone 1 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 5x200 (30") as #1 in Zone 1, #2-3 in Zone 2, #4 in Zone 3, #5 in Zone 4.	<b>BIKE</b> 30' flat terrain as 15' Zone 1, 10' Zone 3, 5' Zone 4 at 90-100 RPM. Quick transition (less than 2'). <b>RUN</b> 15' off the bike, flat terrain as 5' Zone 4, 5' Zone 2, 5' Zone 1.

**FOCAL POINT** You have accomplished a lot! At the end of this week, look back on all your sessions. This will give you a sense of confidence that you are ready to tackle the sprint distance, and it serves as a great reminder when nerves creep up. Racing will be simply doing what you have been doing in training: swimming, biking and running!

### WEEK 8: RACE WEEK

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Day off.	<b>SWIM</b> 200 Zone 1. 8x50 (20") as 25 fast/Zone 4, 25 easy/Zone 1. 100 Zone 1.	<b>RUN</b> 20' flat terrain as 12' Zone 1, 3' Zone 3, 5' Zone 1.	<b>BIKE</b> 30' rolling to hilly terrain as 15' Zone 1, 2x(2.5' Zone 3, 2.5' Zone 2), 5' Zone 1 at 90-95 RPM.	Day off.	<b>BIKE</b> 15' Zone 1 at 90-95 RPM.	Race day!

**FOCAL POINT** If you are feeling excited and nervous, that is a good thing. It means that you care, and the race is important to you. This extra energy will give you a boost on race day. Follow the sessions closely and resist the urge to "test" yourself—save it up for race day! Take time to pre-organize your equipment so race day is simpler. If you can review the course, that will help ensure success. Visualize your best training efforts on the race course.

Lance Watson, LifeSport head coach and Ironman University Master Coach, has trained a number of Ironman, Olympic and age-group champions over the past 28 years. He enjoys coaching athletes of all levels. You can find him at LifeSport Coaching on Facebook or on Twitter at @LifeSportCoach.